

Description

DECK LEVERAGE ANCHOR

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present invention is related to U.S. provisional application 60/428,162 entitled "Deck Leverage Anchor" filed on November 21, 2002, and incorporated by reference herein.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to frame racks, and more specifically, to an apparatus to couple a hydraulic ram to a frame deck.

[0003] Frame racks are typically used to straighten the frame of an automotive vehicle after a collision. A frame rack has a deck onto which the vehicle is placed. A number of towers are positioned around the frame rack. The towers have a chain connected thereto that is coupled to a ram. The chains are connected to the frame of the vehicle and the tower is used to pull the chain toward the tower. Typically, the chains are connected to the vehicle so that the vehicle

frame is pulled out in the same direction of impact. When the pulling of the frame begins, it is often necessary to adjust the direction of pulling so the pulling force remains in the direction of impact. Oftentimes, this requires the tension to be released from the vehicle, the tower position to be adjusted, and tension placed on the vehicle frame in a slightly different direction. This, however, is a time consuming process and thus increases the expense of the collision repair.

[0004] To place tension on the vehicle in a slightly different direction, a separate hydraulic ram is sometimes coupled to a frame deck. The hydraulic ram may provide push/pull capabilities. Because a tower may not be available, a portable hydraulic ram may be used. The portable hydraulic ram is typically coupled to the frame deck using hooks. One problem with using a hook is that the frame deck is typically formed of a sheet of steel material, commonly 0.5" thick. Although the thickness is substantial, the frame deck may easily be bent when localized pulling on the order of thousands of pounds takes place during a straightening operation. If the frame rack is damaged, expensive repairs may be required to be performed. This may result in lost time and thus revenue for the frame

rack operator.

[0005] It would therefore be desirable to provide a system for allowing flexibility in the frame straightening process and reduce potential damage to frame racks.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0006] It is therefore one object of the invention to provide a system suitable for use with a hydraulic actuator that can be easily maneuvered and positioned on a deck such as a deck of a frame rack.

[0007] In one aspect of the invention, an anchor device for coupling an external device to a surface of a deck so that the anchor device is received within an opening of the surface. The opening has an edge above the surface therein. The anchor device includes an anchor body that is positioned at least partially within the opening so that a notch receives the edge of the surface. The anchor device further comprises a coupler that extends outward from the opening. The coupler couples to the external device.

[0008] In a further aspect of the invention, a method for operating a frame rack comprises inserting a portion of a leverage anchor into an opening in the surface of a frame rack, engaging the frame rack surface into a notch of the leverage anchor, and coupling the hydraulic ram to the anchor

device.

- [0009] One advantage of the invention is that frame rack damage may be substantially reduced or eliminated with the use of the deck leverage anchor according to the present invention. The deck leverage anchor distributes the pulling force across the opening of the deck surface such that localized deformation does not take place.
- [0010] Another advantage of the invention is that the relatively compact size reduces the amount of deck space required for coupling.
- [0011] Yet another advantage of the invention is that because of its ease and use, widespread adaptation is likely.
- [0012] Other advantages and features of the present invention will become apparent when viewed in light of the detailed description of the preferred embodiment when taken in conjunction with the attached drawings and appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

- [0013] Figure 1 is a perspective view of an automotive frame rack having a hydraulic system according to the present invention.
- [0014] Figure 2 is a side view of a leverage anchor coupled to a hydraulic actuator according to the present invention.

- [0015] Figure 3 is a side view of a leverage anchor coupled to a deck according to the present invention.
- [0016] Figure 4 is a side view of a deck leverage anchor according to a first embodiment of the invention.
- [0017] Figure 5 is a right side view of the deck leverage anchor according to Figure 4.
- [0018] Figure 6 is a left side view of the deck leverage anchor of Figure 4.
- [0019] Figure 7 is a side view of a second embodiment of the present invention.
- [0020] Figure 8 is a top view of the deck leverage anchor of Figure 7.
- [0021] Figure 9 is a left side view of the deck leverage anchor of Figure 7.
- [0022] Figure 10 is a view of a third embodiment of a deck leverage anchor relative to a fastener plate according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- [0023] In the following figures, the same reference numerals will be used to identify the same components. The following description is set forth with respect to a frame rack for an automotive vehicle. However, the present application has several uses for mounting a device to a deck. It should

also be noted that any quantities and dimensions are provided for illustrative purposes only and should not be limiting unless set forth in the claims of the present invention. Further, the embodiments set forth herein illustrate various alternative features. The various features, however, may be interchanged in the different embodiments. Further, although a two surface deck is used in the following examples, in its simplest form the deck may be a single planar surface.

[0024] Referring now to Figure 1, two hydraulic frame straightening systems 10 according to the present invention are illustrated. Hydraulic systems 10 are illustrated used on a frame rack 12. As mentioned above, however, the frame rack 12 is merely illustrative of one of the many applications of the present invention. Hydraulic system 10 includes a hydraulic actuator 14, a directional converter 16, and a pump 18. A suitable directional converter is described in U.S. Patent Application 10/164,082 (Attorney Docket No. MARX-0101) filed on June 5, 2002, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference herein. As illustrated, two hoses 20A and 20B, fluidically couple directional converter 16 and hydraulic actuator 14. Also, two hoses 22A and 22B fluidically couple directional converter

16 and pump 18. Hydraulic actuator 14 may have a mechanical coupling device such as a pair of claw hooks 24. It should be noted that in various applications claw hooks 24 may be substituted with other mechanical fastening devices such as bolt down components, loops, a deck leverage anchor 40 or stays. Claw hook 24 is illustrated mechanically coupled to a chain 26, which in turn is coupled to a portion of a frame 28 of an automotive vehicle.

[0025] Frame rack 12 may also include various towers 34 that include a ram 36 and a chain 38. Of course, different numbers of towers 34 may be used on a frame rack. A support 33 may be used to support the vehicle.

[0026] Frame rack 12 has a deck 30 for positioning a vehicle thereon. Deck 30 may have openings 32 or tie down holes positioned therethrough. The deck leverage anchor 40 according to the present invention may be secured at least partially within one of the openings 32.

[0027] Referring now to Figure 2, hydraulic actuator 14 or other external device is illustrated coupled to deck 30. Deck 30 may have a first surface 30A spaced apart from a second surface 30B. Deck leverage anchor 40 is coupled to the first surface 30A while a fastener plate 42 is coupled to second surface 30B. As will be further described below,

deck leverage anchor 40 having an anchor body and fastener plate 42 are preferably coupled at least partially through their respective surfaces.

[0028] A pulley 46 may also be coupled to frame rack 30. Pulley 46 may be coupled to frame deck 30 using a pulley coupler 48. The pulley coupler 48 may be shaped similar to that of fastener plate 42. Pulley 46 is used to guide or route chain 46 to a desired position.

[0029] Referring now to Figure 3, deck 30 is illustrated in further detail relative to deck leverage anchor 40. As can be seen, leverage anchor 40 is coupled to ram 36 using a pin or fastener 49. As can be seen, the size of the deck leverage anchor 40 is such that a portion of the deck leverage anchor remains above the surface 30A on top of or on the outside surface of deck 30 while a portion of the deck leverage anchor extends below surface 30A. A notch 50 engages the opening 52 of the surface 30A so that an edge 54 of the surface 30A is positioned within notch 50. As will be further described below, the size of the deck leverage anchor 40 is such that it is larger than the opening 52. A portion of the deck leverage anchor 40 may be longer, wider or longer and wider than the opening 52.

[0030] Referring now to Figures 4, 5, and 6, deck leverage anchor

40 may be coupled to external device 58 through the use of a cotter pin 56 or other type of pin or fastener. A bolt or other device may also be used in place of cotter pin 56. Deck leverage anchor 40 may be formed of a unitary body structure 44 such as by CNC machines out of a single piece of steel. Thus, the whole deck leverage anchor may be formed of a unitary structure. The body 44 of the deck leverage anchor 40 may also be formed of two separate body portions; a first body portion 60 and a second body portion 62. First body portion 60 includes at least one coupler 64. As illustrated in Figures 5 and 6, the present example includes two couplers 64. Couplers 64 are used for receiving cotter pin 56 or another means for coupling to an external device.

[0031] First body portion 60 may also include a first planar member 68 that is coupled to second body portion 62. First planar member 68 is generally parallel to the deck surface 30A. The first planar member rests upon the second body portion. Coupler 64 may extend in a direction perpendicular to first planar member 68 and thus deck 30. A flange 70 may be coupled between first planar member 68 and coupler 64. Flange 70 is an optional feature of first body portion 60. The flange 70 may include a cutout 71 to al-

low access for a coupling device.

[0032] The second portion 62 may also be formed of a unitary structure integral with first body portion 60 or separately therefrom. Second body portion 62 may include a second planar member 72. Second planar member 72 is preferably sized larger than the opening 52 described above. Second planar member 72 may, for example, be wider, longer or both wider and longer than the opening 52. At minimum, the second planar member 72 is preferably longer or wider than the opening 52. The second planar member 72 rests against the upper surface of the deck surface 30A.

[0033] Second body portion 62 includes a lower member 74 that has notch 50 therein. Notch 50 has a height similar to (or just greater than) that of the surface of the deck so that the surface 30A of the deck 30 may be received therein. Notch 50 is generally U-shaped and is positioned along a lateral edge or side of the deck leverage anchor. Of course, those skilled in the art will recognize that the notch 50 may be formed in a longitudinal edge of the second body portion. The lower member 74 has a width W sized to be received within the opening. The lower member 74 may also have a length L1 that is smaller than the

length of the opening. The length L1 corresponds to the distance from the edge of the notch to the end of the lower member 74. Lower member 74 has a length L2 that extends from the outer portion of notch 50 to the end of the lower member 74. Thus, the notch is formed by the difference between L1 and L2. The leftmost extent of L2 may extend the same distance as second planar member 72.

[0034] The first body portion 60 and the second body portion 62 may be coupled together using a fastener 76. Fastener 76 is coupled within a channel 78 that extends through first planar member 68 and second body portion 62. A bolt is illustrated as the fastener 76. A nut 80 may be used to hold the fastener 76 in place. Nut 80 may be fixedly coupled such as welded to the lower member 74. Of course, nut 80 may be located in the position of the fastener head 82. Nut 80 may also be welded to bolt after assembly to prevent later disassembly.

[0035] A second channel 84 may be formed through the second body portion 62. That is, the second channel 84 may be formed through the second planar member 72 and the lower member 74. The channel 84 may be used to receive a fastener, for example, that couples to or is part of the

fastener plate 42.

[0036] Referring now to Figures 7, 8 and 9, a deck leverage anchor 40' is illustrated. The embodiments shown in Figures 7, 8 and 9 will use the same reference numerals for the same components but are primed. The one difference between this embodiment and the embodiments illustrated in Figures 4, 5 and 6 is that no flange 70 is provided on the first body portion 60'. Also, an extension portion 88 that extends from the first planar member 68' and extends into the second body portion 62 is provided. The extension 88 is circular in shape and allows the first portion 60 to rotate relative to the second portion 62. The fastener 76' allows the first body portion 60 to rotate relative to the second body portion 62. In one constructed embodiment, the extension portion 88 extends over 3/8" into the second body portion 62'.

[0037] It should also be noted that the extension portion 88 is comprised of a circular or disc-shaped portion that extends perpendicularly into the first body portion 60 relative to the deck surface 30A. Preferably, the extension 88 is preferably integrally formed with the first body portion 60.

[0038] In this embodiment, the first planar member 68' is

1/2"thick. The second planar member is 3/8"thick while the overall thickness of the second body portion 62' is 1.25". The distance that the first body portion 60 extends from the second body portion is 3.0" in this constructed embodiment. Hole 66' is .925".

[0039] As is best shown in Figure 88, another distinguishing feature from that of the previous embodiment is that the edges 90 of the couplers 64' have a partially rounded top view to correspond with the overall rounded or circular shape of the first planar member 68'.

[0040] Another change from the previous embodiment is that the nut 80' may be recessed within (or integrally formed with) the lower member 74'.

[0041] Referring now to Figure 10, a third embodiment of deck leverage anchor 40' is illustrated. The main difference between this embodiment and the previous embodiments is that the coupler portion 64' is trapezoidal in shape. The trapezoidally-shaped coupler 64' is coupled to a first planar member 68' which in turn is positioned against second planar member 72'. More than one coupler may be used as in the previous embodiments. As illustrated, a fastener plate 42 is illustrated. Fastener plate 42 has a third planar member 90 that is sized greater than the

opening of the deck 30. The third planar member 90 may, for example, be longer or wider than the opening within the deck 30. The third planar member may also be both longer and wider than the opening in deck 30. A second portion 92 of fastener plate 42 is sized to fit within the opening of deck 30. An anchor bolt 94 is used to secure the fastener to the deck leverage anchor 40. As is illustrated, anchor bolt 94 may have threads 96 thereon which engage threads 98 extending through the first body portion 60''' of the deck leverage anchor 40' '. Fastener plate 42 may be used to hold the deck leverage anchor 40' ''' in place upon the use of a large amount of force and/or the use of a high pulling angle (from the deck surface) or skewed angle relative to the opening that may cause the deck leverage anchor 42 to be released from the opening. The fastener plate 42 may be used with any of the embodiments above. In the constructed embodiment, fastener plate 42 was an optional feature.

[0042] While particular embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, numerous variations and alternate embodiments will occur to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, it is intended that the invention be limited only in terms of the appended claims.